

**Performance Funding 2005-10 Cycle
General Education Subcommittee Meeting
May 27, 2004**

Minutes

I. Participants

General Education Subcommittee Members

Jack Armistead (College of Arts and Sciences, TTU; Dean), Kay Clark (TBR, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs), Charle Coffey (Motlow State Community College, Director of Academic Services), Laura Jolly (UT, Knoxville, Professor, Consumer Services Management), Brian Noland, (THEC, Associate Executive Director for Policy, Planning and Research), Tom Rakes (University of Tennessee, Martin).

II. Introductions and Objectives for the Meeting

Dr. Brian Noland provided opening comments and discussed the following issues: the general goal of the Performance Funding Advisory Committee, coordination of subcommittees involved in the 2005-10 Performance Funding Cycle, relation of the new performance funding cycle preparation to the current master planning process, and results of the survey on performance funding. The goal of the subcommittee's effort is to consider and choose among the alternatives of the tests for the general education assessment within the framework of the institutional performance evaluation.

III. Discussion

Dr. Kay Clark commented that the General Education Core should be the basis for developing a system-wide assessment and it was worth exploring the possibility of developing a unique assessment system for Tennessee.

Dr. Jack Armistead noted that the cost of developing general education assessment had usually been disproportionately high. In his view, if Tennessee wishes to be on par with what other states, the likelihood of developing a unique state-wide instrument are limited. He referred to the TTU's experience of using the Critical Thinking Test as a possible example but remarked that it was just one part of the overall General Education assessment process.

Dr. Tom Rakes made the following observations: (1) a new test should set the basis for comparison and (2) enforced assessment may defeat the whole purpose of the exercise. He further noted that two central questions must be answered in this process: (1) Is the new assessment better than the other ones that we are currently doing? and (2) What are the other states doing?

Ms. Charle Coffey discussed the necessity of treating the two-year and four-year institutions differently. Dr. Armistead noted that it is not clear at what point to assess students at four-year institutions. He also noted the potential limitations of relying solely on the assessment experts, which may lead to faculty disconnect.

Dr. Brian Noland emphasized the need to both meet the demand for external accountability and achieve some important goals internally (for improvement purposes). Noting that it was the goal of the pilots, he said that this committee should provide some structure for the institutions.

IV. Critical Thinking Test at Tennessee Technological University

During the discussion of the Critical Thinking Test at TTU, the participants highlighted the following points: the test has been initiated and done bottom up with significant faculty involvement; there should be a clear understanding of how the Gen. Ed. and Critical Thinking correlate and are perceived by faculty and others; there are different views on whether the critical thinking skills are transferable from one discipline to another; the key areas currently in use at TTU may be lacking on the humanities side but communication is a part of the test; institutions should strive both to get higher points on the test and improve curriculum; conservative population often do not want critical thinking development because they equate it with liberal thinking.

Dr. Jack Armistead proposed that the sub-committee determine the expectation of junior and senior students and focus assessment more on the development than on gained scores. He also noted that the sub-committee should set the direction but not impose anything on institutions.

The group agreed with the following statements offered by participants: the faculty on campuses will not be concerned about switching to a new test, which will provide the opportunity of leaving the history of other tests behind and opting for a critical thinking test; the sub-committee should be looking for *multiple* assessment instruments/tests to measure the outcomes of general education; the *Dynamic Assessment* is the most important type of assessment exercise to consider; and the most important goal is releasing the tension between external accountability and internal campus needs.

V. Summary

The participants concluded that by the next meeting of the Subcommittee, the following issues should be resolved:

- 1) What is the general direction to take?
- 2) Is it time for Tennessee to adopt a new test (presumably, the Critical Thinking Test)?
- 3) What are the general instruments available at the national, state, and local (institutional) levels and what is the optimum choice?
- 4) How to involve faculty on a semestral basis in the core activities of assessment but prevent them from using the results of the test?

Each member of the Subcommittee will undertake an analysis of respective and prospective tests currently being utilized nationally and in Tennessee.